A

SERMON

Preached before the

Right Honourable

THE

Lord-Mayor

AND

ALDERMEN

OF THE

City of London,

AT

BOW-Church, *September* 2. 1680.

Being the Anniversary Fast for the Burning of *LONDON.*

By *GILBERT BURNET.*

The Second Edition.

LONDON, Printed for *Richard Chiswell* at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1681.

Case
C
991
.134

Clayton Mayor.

Martis vij. die Septembr' 1680. *Annoque Regis Caroli ſecundi* Angl', *&c. xxxij.*

THis Court doth deſire Dr. *Burnet* to Print his Sermon Preached on the Second of *September* inſtant, at *BOW*-Church, before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this City.

WAGSTAFFE.

K41
187-1938

To the Right Honourable

Sir Robert Clayton,

LORD-MAYOR
OF THE
City of London.

My Lord,

THE *Publiſhing this Sermon, was no eaſy part of my Obedience to your Lordſhip's Commands, and to the Deſires of the Court of Aldermen: for I have no reaſon to expect it ſhould be ſo favourably received, when it is brought under the Eyes and Cenſures of the World, as when it was firſt delivered. Since the good temper the Auditory was in, upon the remembrance of that great Conflagration, made it paſs more acceptably at firſt hearing, than is to be hoped for upon a ſtricter review of it. And ſome Perſons of high Worth and Eminence, have been of late, treated ſo unſuitably, either to their Merit, or their deſigns in what they Preached, that it may juſtly give ſuch a one as I am, apprehenſions of ill uſage, for touching our ſores, which are ſo tender, that ſome cannot bear the handling them in the ſoftest manner.*

 But

But having obſerved that what I ſaid on theſe heads, was not unacceptable to your Lordſhip, who are ſo great a Judge; I do the more freely adventure on making it publick. Since the Juſtice, Prudence, and Moderation of your Government, has given your Lordſhip ſo great an Intereſt in the eſteem and affections, not only of this great City, but of the whole Nation; that as thoſe who are to ſucceed you in that high Truſt, will be valued and loved, as they follow the Pattern you have ſet them; ſo there are few things that can recommend ſuch a Diſcourſe more, than that I may, by your Lordſhip's permiſſion, ſay, it was approved of by one of ſo great an underſtanding, and ſo excellent a temper, as yours is generally known to be.

God grant this may have ſome good effect on thoſe that heard it, or may read it, and that the ſad proſpect now before us, may by the merey of God, upon our unfeigned Repentance, be changed unto a ſerene and happy calm: wherein that your Lordſhip may be a great Inſtrument, both in this City, and in the publick Councils of the Kingdom, is the Earneſt Prayer of

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt Humble, and

moſt Obedient Servant,

G. BURNET.

AMOS, chap. 4. verſe 11, 12.

I have overthrown ſome of you, as God overthrew Sodom *and* Gomorrah, *and ye were as a Firebrand, pluck'd out of the Burning: Yet have ye not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord.*

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Iſrael: *And becauſe I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God,* O Iſrael.

THE remembrance of that diſmal Day, which brings us now together, grows too ſoon ſtale and cold; and perhaps paſſes rather as a doleful Tale, that we are to hand down to the next Age, than as a Subject by which our Repentance and Humiliation are wrought on. We rather glory in our Wealth, and the great Splendor of *London* rebuilt, than are humbled, when we remember how ſhe was laid in Aſhes. The Largeneſs and Evenneſs of the Streets, the Regularity and Beauty of the Houſes, the Magnificence of the Churches, Halls, Gates, the Exchange, the Canal, the Monument, with the other Glories of the City, do perhaps ſo much amuſe us; that, ſeeing now no other Marks, by which we can know what Places were burnt, and what eſcaped that ſpreading and devouring Flame, but the Meanneſs of the one, compared to the Pomp of the other, we are apt to think, Why ſhould ſo diſaſtrous a Day be had in ſuch conſtant remembrance? which might be more ſuitable when the Wound was green, the Aſhes and Rubbiſh were not removed, when the Impreſſion was deep, and Men were more ſenſible of their Loſſes, which in a Succeſſion of fourteen years, they have either digeſted, or being quite broken by them, have made way for new Inhabitants, that had no ſhare of the former Calamity. But now

it

may ſeem too long, to perpetuate the Memory of theſe black Days, and bright Nights, that ſo many of you looked on then with amazement, and muſt ſtill reflect on with horror.

Yet if we conſider, that, how inſtrumental ſoever the Hand of Hell was in it, certainly the Hand, or rather the Breath of Heaven was viſible, both in ſpreading it over ſo many Regions of this populous City, and in ſtopping it of a ſudden, when the Fire had executed its Commiſſion; we cannot but think it fit, after ſo long an Interval, ſtill to remember what may be ſuppoſed to have been the procuring Cauſes of ſuch an unheard-of Burning, which ſeems ſince, by a ſort of Contagion, to have ſpread into many other Cities of the Nation: And whereas in former times, a Fire that carried away a few Houſes was thought diſmal; now except it burn down whole Towns, or Streets at leaſt, we think it gentle and merciful. If we alſo reflect upon the Time when it broke out, that it followed a long and an unhappy War, and a raging Peſtilence, our Miſeries returning ſo thick upon us, as *Job*'s Meſſengers did; all theſe things concurring with the ſad and gloomy Proſpect now before us, *It is ſurely meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born Chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more; if I have done Iniquity, I will do ſo no more.* And joining that we have ſeen and felt, with that which is almoſt all viſibly before us, we muſt conclude, it is fit to turn to Him, who did ſome years ago afflict us ſo ſeverely, but has ſince given us a long Interval of Peace and Plenty, and ſeems now to be *bending his Bow, whetting his Sword, and preparing againſt us the Inſtruments of War.*

Job 43.31.

Pſal 9.12, 13.

The words in the Text, pronounced upon the like occaſion, offer to us, both the Reflection on what is paſt, the Conſideration of what is preſent, and the Proſpect of what we may look for. Of which I ſhall firſt ſpeak a little in General, before I apply them.

This Prophecy was given in Commiſſion to *Amos*, one of the Herdſmen of *Tekoa*, a Town diſtant twelve Miles from *Jeruſalem*, and ſix from *Bethlehem*; ſo that he lived in the Tribe of *Judah*, tho' he was ſent to the Ten Tribes, that ſtill continued in the Idolatry of *Jeroboam*. *Jehu* having rooted out the *Sidonian* Idolatry of the *Baalim*, he and his Family, as a Bleſſing, even upon that imperfect Reformation, reigned over theſe Tribes 104 years; but

but the Period of it was now near an end, and with it, of the Peace and Liberty of that Kingdom: For *Jeroboam*'s Son, *Zacharias*, reigned only six Months; and his Murtherer, *Shallum*, but one Month. *Menahem*, who conspired against him, reigned ten Years; yet against him came up the King of *Assyria*, the conquering Empire of that Age; and though *Menahem* redeemed his present Quiet, by the Tribute of a Thousand Talents, that procured them only a whiles respite. His Son, *Pekahiah*, being a wicked Prince, *Pekah* conspired against him, and killed him in the second Year of his Reign. Then *Tiglath-Pileser*, another *Assyrian* King, came, and perhaps pretended to revenge the Death of *Manahem* their Ally's Son, and carried away most of the Land of *Galilee* into Captivity. And the total Captivity of these Tribes followed under the next King. So that from the Days of this Prophecy, what by the Revolutions of Government at home, what by the Impressions the proud *Assyrians* made on them, they had a Succession of grievous Calamities, which ended in the total Subversion of that State. And they were so dispersed in their Captivity, that except some Straglers that might have returned with *Zorobabel*, they were never again gathered together; so that it is now only matter of conjecture what is become of them.

Compare 2 *Kings* 10. 36. & 13. 1, 10. & 14. 23.

2 *Kings* 15. 19.

2 *Kings* 15. 29.

2 *Kings* 17. 6.

Amos was one of the last Messengers, that was sent to invite them to Repentance. God had before spoken to them in the dismal Language of his Judgments, by Famine, by the blasting of their Harvest, and binding up the Clouds, that it did not rain; by such Mildew, and Vermine, as had consumed all their Fruits, their Vines, Olives, and Figs; by War, and the Plague, to such a degree that their Dead were not buried, but lay in the Fields, to infect the Air, and to offend the Living. *The Stink of your Camps came into your Nostrils.* Which are all mentioned in the Verses before my Text. And finally, that some of their Cities had been burnt down by the Hand of Heaven. Two years after this, another Calamity came on them, from such an Earthquake, mentioned by *Zachariah*, that the People, terrified with it, thought of flying out of the Land; for this Time being contemporary to that of *Uzziah*, the Earthquake there mentioned, which became a Proverb, seems to be the same spoken of in the first verse of this Prophecy. So that this honest Shepherd was called from his Flocks, to see, if the Simplicity and Plainness of the Man, and of his Stile, which is the lowest of any of all the Prophets, could be a Mean to awaken them out of their Impieties. The

Zach. 14 5.

The Sins he accuſes them moſt for, were their *Irreligion*, deſi-
c. 2 21. ring to ſtop the Mouths of the Prophets, ſaying, *Propheſie not.* And tho' they obſerved the returns of their Feſtivities, their New-Moons, and Sabbath Days; yet they were weary of them, ob-
chap 8 5. ſerving them only for Forms ſake, and longed to have them over. He alſo charges them for their *Luxury*: They had rebuilt their burnt and waſted Cities with hewen Stone, and had planted pleaſant
c. 5 11. Vineyards and Olive-yards; they drank Wine in Bowls, ſomething like Healths now a-days; they anointed themſelves with
c. 6 4 5,6. rich Ointment, had their Beds of Ivory, and rich Couches about their Tables, feaſted high and had excellent Muſick at their Entertainments, were guilty of great Iniquity and Oppreſſion, ſo
chap. 5. 7. that there was no Truth nor Juſtice among them. And they were become ſo barefac'd and impudent in their Vices, that good
c. 5 13. and prudent men thought fit to *keep ſilence in that Time, becauſe it was an evil Time*. For all theſe reaſons the Prophets threaten them with a Captivity, and other ſevere Judgments; and that becauſe
chap. 3. 2. *God had known them only of all the Families of the Earth, therefore he would puniſh them for their Iniquities.*

In the Words I have read, he ſays, *I have overthrown you* (*ſome* is not in the Hebrew) *as God did* Sodom *and* Gomorrah. *As*, does not import in the Scripture-Phraſe an exact reſemblance, but only ſome Similitude in general. So that it does not neceſſarily import, that Fire came down from Heaven on them, but that they were overthrown totally, perhaps by Fire, Thundring or Lightning. The *Chaldee Paraphraſt* underſtood it more generally and rendred it thus: *The Word of the Lord abhorred them, as he did* Sodom *and* Gomorrah.

You were as a Firebrand pluck'd out of the Burning. A proverbial Form of Speech, either expreſſing the great Danger they had run, with the extraordinary Deliverance they had met with, God reſcuing them on a ſudden; as alſo the deſpicableneſs of their
Zech. 3. 2. Jude 23. preſent Condition, ſince nothing looks worſe than a Firebrand ſnatch'd out of the Fire.

Yet have you not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord. They continued in their Impieties, and irreligious Worſhip, in their Separation from their right way of worſhipping God at *Jeruſalem*, in their Luxury, Senſuality, and Injuſtice: and all the Judgments they had felt, which perhaps might have a little awakened them, when they lay under them, had not any ſuch effect, as to turn their Hearts or to change the Couſe of their Lives. *Therefore*

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Iſrael; *and becauſe I will do thus unto thee. Thus,* may either relate to the former Judgments, as if they were to be repeated upon them; or to what follows of the Captivity threatned in the beginning of the next Chapter, *The Virgin of Iſrael being fallen, and not able to riſe*; Ten being left of an Hundred, and a Hundred of a Thouſand.

Prepare thee to meet thy God, O Iſrael. This is either an Ironical Alarm to them, to ſee what they could do to reſiſt that God the God of Hoſts, that formed the Mountains, created the Wind, knew the Secrets of Mens Hearts, could bring darkneſs on the Earth in a bright Sunſhine, and tread upon the high Places of the Earth; the great Powers and mighty Empires, at his Pleaſure: they were to try how they were able to reſiſt his Thunders, to bind up the Clouds, or the Winds of Heaven, or to diſperſe thoſe Armies that he was to ſend againſt them; whom he would inſpire with great Courage, when they ſhould be ſtuck with pannick Fear, and ſuch ſorrow and dejection of Mind, that all their Songs ſhould be turned to Lamentations. Or this, *Prepare thee to meet thy God,* is an Invitation to Repentance, as that which could only avert thoſe Judgments that were ready to break forth on them, and diſſipate the Clouds; ſo that inſtead of the Storms they had reaſon to look for, they might be bleſs'd with a ſerene Calm, and entire Peace, upon their returning to God.

Having thus opened the Scope and Intention of the Prophet in the Text, I ſhall now ſpeak to theſe four Particulars.

I. When we have met with Judgments, ſignal, both in their kind, and in the deliverance out of them, we ought to remember God's hand in them, and to conſider, for what ends he both laid them on, and took them off.

II. We ought to conſider, what effect theſe have had on us; Whether they have made us turn to God, or not?

III. We are to conſider, how much ſeverer Judgments we may reaſonably look for, if thoſe that have already come upon us, have not prevailed to make us return to God.

IV. Upon all this, we ought to look unto God, and to endeavour to prevent that which we cannot otherwiſe avoid or reſiſt, by an unfeigned Repentance.

For the Firſt of theſe: If we believe, that the World is governed by a Supream Providence, we muſt conclude, that more aſtoniſhing and extraordinary Events, not only fall not out by chance, but are directed for ſome great ends, proportioned to ſuch means. If either an Accident, or a Combination of curſed Men, firſt kindled this Fire, yet the Wind that waited on it, and drove it forward with ſuch violence, that neither the many Hands that were employed to quench it, the Neighbourhood of ſo much Water, the Engines uſed, and all the other means that could be thought on, were effectual to ſtop its Rage, till it had done its Work, was a manifeſt Indication of the Hand of God in it. And how much ſoever Mens thoughts may be now blunted on this Subject, yet then, as I have underſtood from thoſe that ſaw it, there were few that look'd on, that ſeemed not touched with the apprehenſions of God's diſpleaſure. Many that were not immediately concerned in it, yet ſmote on their Breaſts, and ſaid, *This is of God, let us return to Him.*

I ſhall not enlarge on the Deſcription of it, or of the unexpected ſtopping of it in many places, even in the midſt of very combuſtible Matter; ſo that the quenching of it had almoſt as manifeſt Characters of a Divine Appointment on it, as the Conflagration it ſelf. It would very ill become one that ſaw it not, to ſpend much Diſcourſe about it to thoſe that ſaw it, and as it is to be preſumed, will never forget it, but will tell it to the ſucceeding Age; as God commanded the *Iſraelites* to convey down to Poſterity, the remembrance of the Captivity they had groaned under in *Egypt*, with the ſignal Deliverance out of it: for things of ſo extraordinary a nature ought never to be forgotten.

I know it is not fit, upon every Calamity to enter into the Secrets of God's Providence, nor to determine what were, and were not the procuring Cauſes: or what were the more principal ones. In theſe Caſes men of ſeveral Parties, have always found out ſomewhat in which they thought themſelves leaſt concerned, and have been willing to load that with the whole burthen of God's Indignation; and ſo upon this occaſion, Men have

have not been wanting to assign such Causes, as might make those from whom they differed more hateful. But who has said, *What have I done?* And indeed though we may err in saying, one thing more than another drew down this Judgment on us, and in the enumeration of the Causes of it, may fail in the Account; yet it is certain, that when we lay them all together, and more particularly reflect on such of them, wherein we find our selves most concerned, we are in the readiest way to prevent the like, or heavier Judgments, from coming on us for the future. It were also a vain and bold Presumption in any, to enquire into this Secret, Why this City more than others, or these parts of it more than others, were burnt down? Our Saviour, by his Answer upon the like occasion, concerning those whose blood *Pilate* mixed with their Sacrifices, or those on whom the Tower of *Siloah* fell, takes all men off from such Curiosities, suggesting to them a more profitable Meditation: *I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* In general, we are certain that God afflicts us not willingly; and so, without a more particular enquiry, we may conclude, that there were great reasons for this awakening Dispensation. And therefore, instead of looking backward any longer, I now proceed to the Second Point, to examine, What effects this or the like Providences have produced upon us? And whether we have returned to the Lord, or not? Luk. 13 3, 5.

I shall confine my Discourse to those three Heads, on which the Prophet founds his Charge, *Irreligion*, *Luxury*, and *Unrighteousness*; and shall desire you to bear with the Plainness, which becomes such a Subject, and such an Occasion. I cannot say upon the first Head, of *Religion*, that the chief part of the Prophet's Accusation concerns us: for the Sins of *Dan* and *Bethel* do not belong unto us; we have not set up a new Way of Religion, different from that appointed by God; we have not been guilty of any open Idolatry, in Worshipping the Works of Mens hands, or of making any resemblance of that invisible Being whom we adore. But in the Head of Religion, I shall name other things, wherein we have been as far from returning to God, as the Ten Tribes were.

First, They minded nothing but the external Pageantry, the Musick, and other outward Performances, and were weary often of these, so that their solemn Days were Abominations to God. And now if we look among our selves, though there may be

perhaps more care in this great City, than in any of the World, about the decent Obſervation of the Sabbath; this is the Magiſtrates Glory, who do ſo carefully reſtrain the Violation of that holy Time; yet many of thoſe, who in compliance with Cuſtom go to Church, do it meerly for Form. But if we examine what theſe Aſſemblies amount to, for the greateſt part, we cannot think but God abhors and deſpiſes them. Many go to them only for Cuſtom; others, to ſhew their vain Apparel, and dreſs themſelves with ſuch gaudy Pomp, as if it were a Play, rather than the Worſhip of God, they went to bear a ſhare in. I ſpeak not againſt modeſt Decency and Cleanneſs; but the vanity of many Peoples Dreſs is no ſmall Scandal to our Churches, who not only gratify their own Pride, but do all they can to diſtract and tempt others.

In the Worſhip of God, how little ſerious are we in all the parts of it? We confeſs our Sins without Contrition, we pray without Devotion, we praiſe God without Affection, we hear the Scriptures without Faith: So in a word, all is but Form, and even of that we grow ſoon weary. Any excuſe ſerves us, either to be abſent, or to come late. The too viſible coldneſs of moſt Peoples behaviour ſhew their Hearts join not with their Bodies or their Lips in the Worſhip of God. For Sermons, they are hearkened to, as other Diſcourſes are, which we either cenſure or commend, as we ſee cauſe, or perhaps ſleep all the while: But if we do mind them, it is for moſt part rather to furniſh our ſelves with ſome Notion, to maintain Diſcourſe, and to gratify our Vanity, than to be truly edified by them. And what we hear that more immediately concerns our ſelves, we put off, perhaps, with a ſlight Groan, and may be ſay within our ſelves, *God be merciful to us, we are all Sinners.* Do we think God is pleaſed or can be delighted with ſuch Aſſemblies?

For the two Sacraments, the Devotion of the one is almoſt quite gone, it becomes a matter of Entertainment, and is uſed as a Ceremony that brings much Coſt with it; the Sponſors conſidering more the Fees they are to give, than the Vows they make; and theſe being ſo ſlightly made, no wonder they are ſlightly performed. It is true, the other Sacrament is kept up with a little more ſeriouſneſs, ſome more Preparation and Devotion, but becauſe People are a little apprehenſive of this, many take the beſt courſe they can to eaſe themſelves of it, and do not

not receive in many years, unleſs the Law of the Land make it neceſſary, which is by too many more conſidered than the Laws of Chriſt in his holy Goſpel. If we ſum all theſe together, and reflect on the Coldneſs and Deadneſs we are all guilty of, in our Religion and religious Worſhip, can we think that we have yet *returned to the Lord?* Can ſuch a dead lifeleſs way of ſerving him, be acceptable to him, that knows how far our Hearts are from him, when we draw near to him with our Lips? Can he take pleaſure in theſe Aſſemblies, which, as all Forms muſt be, that are not enlivened by an internal Devotion, grow burdenſome to our ſelves; and are only kept up as a Compliance, either to Cuſtom, or ſome Remainder of a natural Religion, that we have not been able to extinguiſh quite in our Conſciences, after many Attempts made to fear them.

But to all this it may be oppoſed, Are not we zealous for the Reformation? Sure all this Heat and Flame muſt riſe from true Religion? I deny not, but this great City has been on all occaſions very forward in expreſſing their Zeal for the Reformation; but even upon this Head, God has not a few things to charge us with. St. *Paul* tells us of a Zeal of a far higher Strain, than I am afraid ours riſes to, even of *giving ones Body to be burnt*; which yet would profit nothing, if it flowed not from true *Charity*. So if our Heat about Religion riſe not from a true and internal Love to it, God may make it uſeful to others, but it ſhall avail us nothing. The Corruptions of true Religion, in all Times, have riſen from this, That thoſe who would not ſubmit to the neceſſary, but hard and difficult parts of it, have ſtudied to cheat themſelves, and if they could, to bribe God, by ſetting up in room of theſe, ſome more eaſie and pompous things, which their Circumſtances qualified them for, and they have ſpent much of their Wealth and Heat upon theſe. Some have adorned Churches, and adulterated ſeveral parts of Religion, by the Splendor they have added to them; Some have been very exact in external Performances; others have taken pleaſure even in rigours on themſelves, and others have been active and zealous in that Cauſe, which they took to be the Cauſe of God. According to the difference of Mens Conſtitutions, ſo they have choſen various Ways, that did moſt ſute with their Tempers, and by a great Zeal about theſe, have pacified thoſe Clamours, which otherwiſe are apt to riſe in a guilty Conſcience. The Sanguine love Pageantry; the

1 *Cor.* 13. 2.

Flegma-

Flegmatick the dull returns of their Forms; the Melancholly affect Severities; and the Cholerick are peevish and passionate, and think those Heats that are natural to them, are Sacrifices of great value with God. But will he accept of these from such defiled hands?

I know, those that are inwardly possessed with the Love of God and their Neighbour, and have a just sense of the Love their Reedemer hath shewed them, must have a very lively concern in those things that relate to his Glory, and the Salvation of our Souls. But if we only put on a heat, and counterfeit a Zeal, where there is no good Principle under it, this is but to mock God, and think to pay him with false Coin, because it has the superscription of the true. If our Zeal is only Passion or Faction, then to offer this up to God, is to bring wild Fire, and kindle it on his Altar.

There are two sad Indications, that declare the Zeal of the greatest part is no better: The one is, that the rest of their Lives are not of a piece with their Zeal. It is an impudent thing for any to pretend, that he is concerned that others should glorify God, when he is so ready to dishonour him himself; or that the sincere Belief, or pure Way of Worship, may be preserved, when he so cares, as if he neither believed in his Heart, nor worshipped God in his Spirit. God is not mocked, but discerns through all our Disguises, the secret Thoughts and Intents of our Hearts. I speak not this to cool or lessen your Zeal for the Reformation, but to direct it aright, that it being fixed on a better Principle than either Passion or Interest, may have a deeper root, and a stronger operation, may be more acceptable with God, and more effectual by his Blessing: which cannot be expected to Hypocritical Pretences, or at best, the Fermentation of Revenge or Interest.

Another sad Symptom, that shews our Zeal about Religion is not what it ought to be, appears in these unnatural Heats, that grow every day among our selves, for things, of which to speak modestly, a Man must say, they deserve not that warmth which we bestow on them. If a Man is so far free from the Contagion which most are infected with, by being of a Party, as to consider the things themselves, he cannot but stand amazed, to see Men, who agree in all the Substantials of Religion, quarrel so violently about some external and less important Matters, when the

the Enemy is at the Gates. It was one of the cleareſt Demonſtrations of the Wrath of God on *Jeruſalem*, that during their laſt Siege, the Factious were ſo high within, that as they had any reſpite from the Enemy without, they were deſtroying one another. They would not know the things that belonged to their Peace in time, and ſo they were hid from their Eyes in the day of their Viſitation. When the *African* Churches were ready to be devoured by the *Vandals*, who beſides the Barbarity of their Tempers, were *Arrians* by their Religion; The Schiſm of the *Donatiſts* did ſo rage, and was managed with ſuch heat, too much of both Sides, as St. *Auſtin* laments, that it was a manifeſt ſign of their approaching Ruin; yet that holy Father, with the other Biſhops of that time, made great Offers for comprehending the *Donatiſts* within the Unity of the Church; one was, to take them into a ſhare of their Functions, and that the Survivor ſhould be the ſole Paſtor. But ſecular Men enflamed the Differences, and the Governors puniſhed the *Donatiſts* ſo ſeverely, that St. *Auſtin* wrote often to them, to ſtop theſe violent Proceedings. But that holy man dyed, while *Hippo* was beſieged, and the Prop of theſe Churches being removed, they ſoon became a Prey to their cruel Enemies, who brought them all under a moſt terrible and undiſtinguiſh'd Perſecution.

Lib. 1. *con. Parm. cap.* 7. *lib.* 3 *con. Petil c.* 49, 50.

Epiſt 60, 127, 158, 159, 160.

When the *Mahometan* Impiety, and *Saracen* Empire, was ſpreading in the Eaſt, the *Greek* Empire fell into ſuch Diviſions and Animoſities about the Will of Chriſt, and the Uſe of Images, that disjoynted them one from another, and made way for the growth of *Mahometaniſm*. Shall we follow theſe Paterns ſo carefully, as if we were afraid to miſs ſuch Calamities as fell on them? Are we ſo little ſenſible of the Advantages we give our Enemies, and the weakning we bring upon our ſelves by ſuch Jealouſies and Heartburnings? St. *Paul*, when the *Corinthians* following their juſt Law-Suits before Unbellevers, brought thereby a ſcandal on Chriſtianity, charged them *rather to ſuffer Wrong, than that a Brother ſhould go to Law with a Brother*. If ſuch things, which had a foundation in Juſtice and Property, were to be forborn for their Indecency; O how much more reaſonable is it now for thoſe who publiſh the glad Tidings of Peace, to lift up their Voices as a Trumpet, to ſound a Retreat from this ungodly War in our Church, and to call Men off from their unſeaſonable Heats, to a greater Calm and Temper, when the Effects of them are like to be ſo fatal.

1 Cor. 6. 5, 6.

It

It has been the Device of the Church of *Rome*, both to keep Unity within her ſelf, and to foment Differences among others, ever ſince the Reformation. They have Differences among them of a far higher nature than any we have among us. The moſt material Differences in Matters of Doctrine, that have raiſed the greateſt Animoſities in this Iſland, have been about the Nature of Divine Grace, and the Order of the Decrees of God: but thoſe have been carried as high, if not higher, in the Church of *Rome*. I need not mention the many Differences among the ſeveral Families of the Schoolmen, who have invented various Explanations of almoſt all the Myſteries of their Religion, and have defended their Sentiments with as little Modeſty of Language, as many of our Writers do; yet all this has not broken their Church. In that which is to them the fundamental Point of their Religion, *Where the ſupreme Power of judging Controverſies infallibly is lodged*; tho' they all agree againſt us, that there muſt be a living infallible Judge, yet they do not agree in whom this Power is placed. Many ſet up the Pope; others are ſo aſhamed of this, that they are for the Council, without the Pope; and others chuſe a middle way, and are for aſcribing it to the Pope and Council together: And yet if the Council has either the Infallibility entirely, or has any ſhare in it, ſo that it is no where without its concurrence, then they have no infallible Judge, it being 115 years ſince they had a General Council, and 'tis like to be much longer before another comes.

I need not enlarge on their other Differences, either the ancienter Conteſts concerning the Immaculate Conception of the B. Virgin, which were not only ſupported by ordinary Reaſonings, but by Pretences to Viſions and Revelation; and the latter Conteſts, that are yet depending at the Court of *Rome*, concerning the Morals of the Jeſuits, and other modern Caſuiſts: All theſe ſhew the Varieties among them in Matters of Doctrine.

Thoſe who have Travelled among them, and narrowly obſerv'd their Cuſtoms, ſee that there are no ſmall Diverſities in the Rites and Forms of their Worſhip. Every Nation, and every Religious Order, has ſome Rites that are peculiar to them; and tho' the *Roman* Office is now uſed moſt commonly, yet as the *Ambroſian* continued long at *Millain*, and the *Mozarabick* in ſome parts of *Spain*; ſo here in *England*, the Southern parts followed the Uſe of *Sarum*; the Northern, the Uſe of *York*; *South-wales*, the Uſe

of

of *Hereford*; and *North-Wales* the Uſe of *Bangor*; beſides a peculiar Uſe that *Lincoln* had for that large Dioceſs. All which ſhew how willing they were to knit all People to their Communion, indulging them ſome peculiar Rites, either different from, or added to the reſt. So well have they ſtudied the Policy of keeping their whole Strength united together, againſt thoſe they call Hereticks, and their common Enemies; tho' they have not been able to bring all their Votaries to an Uniformity, either in Points of Doctrine, or the Forms of Worſhip.

They have no leſs induſtriouſly blown upon and improved all the Differences among the Reformed, to break them among themſelves. Could ſo ſmall a matter, as the Difference about the Preſence of Chriſt in the Sacrament, (which was only a ſpeculative part, ſince their Worſhip did not differ) have ſo divided the *Lutheran* and *Helvetian* Churches, if ſome ſecret Practices of theirs had not wrought on the Weakneſs and Paſſions of ſome angry Men? The *Papiſts* ſaw this as well on the one hand, as the Princes and ſoberer Divines perceived it on the other. At one Publick Conference, appointed by the Diet of the Empire, between *Papiſts* and *Proteſtants*, for ſetling Religion, the *Papiſts* knowing their weak Side, and deſirous to throw a Bone among them, propoſed, that they ſhould firſt agree to condemn the *Helvetians*. *Melanchon* perceived what this aimed at, and ſo ſtudied to divert it, but other peeviſh Divines grew ſo hot about it, that they broke up the Meeting, to the no ſmall joy of the Popiſh Party.

Hiſtory of the Council of *Trent*, *lib.* 5. *An.* 1557.

How far they may have practiſed among us to inflame our Differences, I ſhall not determine, but I am ſure there is nothing we can poſſibly contrive, more both to their Advantage and Satisfaction, than this is. The Heathen Philoſophers had different Schools, but worſhipped in the ſame Temples. The Primitive Chriſtians differed in many Cuſtoms, both about the Obſervation of *Eaſter* and *Lent*, with many other various Rites; but they never broke the Bond of Peace and Perfection, the Unity of the Church till the Biſhops of *Rome* began to lay their Yoke upon the other Churches. It were a great happineſs to be exactly of the ſame mind: and ſuch as differ from the Publick Conſtitution, ought certainly to examine the ground of theſe Differences, with calm and unprejudiced minds: And to pronounce my own opinion freely, and without reſerves, I am very confident if that were

done, with the Care and Application that is requiſite, the Truth would ſoon appear to be of our Church's ſide: and if there be yet any Defects in our Conſtitution, or any thing that requires Amendment or Improvement; as no doubt, none ever was ſince the Apoſtles days that needed it not; then let clear Reaſon, and calm, but ſteady Endeavours be uſed for compleating or ordering what is wanting or amiſs among us; which his late Glorious Majeſty offered to redreſs, for ſetling this Church. And it will ſeem ſtrange, if any who Glory ſo much, and ſo juſtly, in the Honour the Church Received by ſo great a Teſtimony, as his Martyrdom gave it, ſhould not follow thoſe Thoughts, which He, after a long courſe of Sufferings, and deep and devout ſtudy about them, had taken up; a due difference being made between the things that he offered in compliance to the heat of that time, and the more retired Reflections himſelf had.

But if ſo great a Happineſs, as a compleat Unity cannot be attained to, let us, at leaſt, lay aſide our Unnatural, Unchriſtian, and unpolitick Animoſities; condeſcending to the Infirmities of the Weak, and pitying them rather than inſulting over them: Let ſuch mutual allowances be given as Human Infirmity, the weakneſs of many mens Reaſons, the ſtrength of their Paſſions, and the force of Prejudice and Education require. And if we will ſo order our Zeal, that its firſt and chief Operation be on our ſelves, reforming our lives, and purifying our Hearts, and then apply it proportionably to other things, giving to every part of Religion ſuch a ſhare of it as the importance of the thing requires; then a great deal of our heat would be ſoon allayed.

But to ſpeak plainly; Is it a Chriſtian Zeal to diſſeminate Lies and Scandals? To expoſe men that have deſerved highly, for ſome ſuppoſed Miſtakes? Theſe things ought not ſo to be. If thoſe that run about with the greateſt violence, blowing on ſuch ſparks, would examine themſelves, as in the preſence of God, what is the ſecret cauſe or ſpring of all their Motions, I am ſure much of it will be found to flow from *bitter Envy and Strife, which bring on Confuſion and every evil work: and not from the Wiſdom that is from above, and is firſt pure and then peaceable, and eaſy to be intreated.* And as we *ought in meekneſs inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves*; ſo others ſhould not expreſs too great uneaſineſs at the inſtructions we offer them.

Jam 3. 16, 17.

2 Tim. 2. 25.

If

If we will reflect on the high value our Saviour ſet on our loving one another, that thereby *all men ſhould know that we are his Diſciples*, it would ſoon change our Temper; ſo that being aſhamed of our former Conteſts, if we could not of a ſudden come to think the ſame things, yet the ſame Spirit of Meekneſs, Humility and Charity dwelling in us, we ſhould ſoon grow up into one Body: from which we are not kept, ſo much by the Differences themſelves that we diſpute about, as by that Alienation of Mind, which hath ſo violently rent us from one another. And this makes that for all the Evils which we have either felt, or do ſtill fear, inſtead of accuſing or condemning our ſelves, we lay the blame wholly upon others. The City blames the Country, and the Country the City: We of the Church blame thoſe of the Separation, and they of the Separation blame us of the Church: But alas! who look into their own Conſciences, and humble their ſelves before God! Joh 13. 35.

This Evil is of the Lord, therefore let us turn to him with our whole Heart: and we ſhall certainly feel, that as a ſpirit of true and real Holineſs riſes in us, we ſhall grow above theſe Conteſts for ſmall matters. For God ſeems to puniſh us with this diviſion of Language and Heart, as he did the Builders of *Babel*, for our other ſins; ſince without a ſtroke from Heaven, a common meaſure of Infatuation could not carry this ſo far.

And now I go to the next particular charged by the Prophet on theſe Tribes, wherein they had not returned unto the Lord: That was *Luxury*. They had rebuilt their Houſes, furniſhed them glorioufly, and ſurfeited themſelves with their Plenty: which they abuſed by their exceſſive Intemperance, both in eating, drinking, and in other Jollities; being inſenſible of the Judgments of God, that had either fallen on them, or were hanging over them. And in this, how parallel are our ſins to theirs? This City is rebuilt with an increaſe of Luxury, as well as Order and Beauty: How many do exceed their Rank and Condition, the many Breakings do too manifeſtly declare: few are contented to live in that moderate Frugality and Decency that their Anceſtors uſed; and complain of want and decay of Trade, becauſe there comes not in enough to ſupply their Vanities, or to ſerve their Luxury. The Intemperance that abounds is too notorious to be much inſiſted on: as if thoſe Liquors which God hath bleſſed us with, for refreſhing and reſtoring our Spirits, were to be uſed

either for the inflaming of our Lusts, the depressing our Reasons, impairing our Healths, and the profuse wasting of our Time and Estates. Inventions also must be fallen on for the decent forcing others to the like Excesses, by setting Healths about. A practice so ridiculously Brutal, that it were a loss of words to go to expose it: Hereby men are not satisfied to Gratify their own Intemperance, but must lay snares for others. And how studiously do these Agents for Vice, endeavour to corrupt all that are so unhappy as to fall in their ill Company; training them on by degrees, till they have raised them to the like pitch of Impiety with themselves. To this is joyned the Excess and Curiosity of Entertainments, which has been long accounted one of the special Vices of this City. Our Bodies when nourished in the most moderate manner, and kept down with Exercise, yet are apt enough to raise many Temptations in us: which we ought not to cherish, by laying in a too plentiful provision for the Flesh, with its Lusts and Affections. When People give themselves up to all the incentives to Lust, and by Jollities, Musick, Balls, Drinking and Feasting, have laid themselves out to so many Temptations, and prepared so much fewel within for these impure Flames to work on; it is no wonder that all excess of Riot and Wantonness should follow such Disorders. The Indecencies of both Sexes going to Taverns, the corruption of a defiled Stage, the gross Liberties which many take, have now run us into such a mire of Filth and Sensuality, that it is scarce decent to rake in that kennel: and to speak of the things that are done, alas, not in secret, but in the sight of the Sun; *Shall not God visit for these things?* Have we yet returned unto him? or do we not go on to dare Heaven, and work all manner of Abominations with greediness. And while such Vices abound, and so many Judgments hang over us, who is betaking himself to Fasting and Prayer? who hath cut off any of his former Excesses, or is accusing himself? Sin and Lewdness are still growing, and it's like will go on, till, as the Prophet threatens, *God shall make your Sun to go down at Noon, and darken the Earth in the clear day.* Poetical Expressions for unlook'd for Miseries. *Then he will turn your Feasts unto mourning, and all your Songs unto Lamentations*: and instead of the vanities of your Apparel, and the costly dresses on your Heads, *will bring Sackcloth on all your loyns, and baldness on all your heads, and make your mourning to be like the mourning of an only Son.*

The

The third thing for which the Prophet accuſes the ten Tribes, is, that which Luxury muſt carry with it, to ſupport it; their *Injuſtice and Oppreſſion.* A man that ſpends profuſely on himſelf, as he diſables himſelf from giving the Poor ſuch a ſhare of his wealth as he ought to do; ſo he grows unable to perform thoſe ſtricter Duties of Juſtice and Equity to his Neighbours with whom he deals. Men that will live high, muſt maintain it by all poſſible means: If the cheating, even a Friend, the Sophiſticating corrupted Goods, the defrauding Creditors, by covering one with ſome Protection, or pretending he breaks, to force Abatements of juſt Debts, or perhaps the profuſe waſting both his own Stock, and the Stocks with which others have truſted him, become neceſſary to furniſh out his Luxury and Vanity, he ſticks at none of them. I do not doubt but the Regulations made in this great City are as exact and well conſidered as in any ſuch City in the World; but as long as the high way of living continues, many unrighteous things muſt be invented for defraying that Expence. Juſtice and Righteouſneſs are among the firſt Elements of Virtue, which Nature does ſo early teach all men; and are ſo neceſſary to the Peace and Government of the World, that we do very impudently pretend to the high things of Religion, if we have not begun with theſe which are the loweſt ſteps to it. If Trade is carried on by Lying, Cheating, Sophiſticating, Extortion, and unregulated Uſury, can a Bleſſing be expected from Heaven, on Wealth ſo acquired? If men make *their Weights ſmall, and falſify their Balances by Deceit, ſo that they ſell the Poor bread, ſhall God forget theſe things? ſhall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein?* If the Myſtery of ſome Trades conſiſts in the Cheats of them; if Retailing is manag'd by lying; if Debts are paid by cozenage and fraud; if Bargains are made after too much Wine hath numbed or over-heated the Spirits of the one Party, of which the other takes the advantage; if men have ever ſo much wealth, and cunning both in acquiring and preſerving it; yet according to the Prophetical expreſſions in the Ninth Chapter, *Though they dig unto hell God will take them thence, and though they climb up unto Heaven he will bring them down; though they hide themſelves on the tops of Mountains, he will ſearch and take them out from thence, and if they ſhould lie as cloſe as in the Bottom of the Sea, he will command a ſerpent to bite them.* In theſe Points we ought on ſuch days of Humiliation, if we intend not to add the Mockery of theſe to our

8. *ch.* 5, 6, 8. *v.*

9. *ch* 2 3. *ver.*

other

other Sins, to examine our ſelves, as in the Preſence of God, and ſee whether we have either departed from our old Sins, or inſtead of doing that, do not only continue in them, but contract new Guilt. If we will break the Yokes of Oppreſſion and Injuſtice, if we convert what formerly went to our Luxury and Vanity, and apply it to the Neceſſity of our poor Brethren; and if inſtead of theſe Forms (in the repeating which we have too long placed all our Religion) and of our bitter Heats, we do follow *Peace with all men, and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* then when we pray to him, he will hear our Prayers, *our Light ſhall ſhine out under all* that Darkneſs, that now covers us; *God ſhall guide us continually, and ſo ſatisfy our ſouls, that we ſhall delight our ſelves in him and his Service.*

But if we will ſtill continue in our Sins, and ſatisfie our ſelves with ſo ſlight a way of ſerving God, then we may look for either the like, or heavier Judgments: which is the third thing I propoſed to ſpeak to; *Therefore thus will I do unto thee.* All the Corrections that God lays on us, are to amend us, but if theſe prevail not, then other ſeverer means muſt be uſed for the ſame end, more ſearching Medicines when gentler ones cannot raiſe or carry off the Humours; and in Concluſion, God often makes thoſe Nations on whom he had beſtowed the moſt diſcriminating Marks of his Favour, the moſt publick Inſtances of his Juſtice, as he did the *Jews* of old, for their Idolatry, and the *Roman* Empire, after they had ſo ſtrangely corrupted the Chriſtian Religion: more ſignal Judgments being perhaps the only means left to work on ſome, whom indulgent Providences do not prevail with; who indeed can be awakened by nothing, but Thunder and Lightning. In the Government of the World, the Methods of divine Providence are ſo myſterious, that it very ill becomes us, to take on us to judge how things ſhall fall out; yet ſince *Solomon* has obſerv'd that there is nothing new *under the Sun*, and by what has been, we may collect what may be; there are two things threatned by this Prophet; *a Famine, not of Bread, nor a Thirſt for Water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord: ſo that they ſhould wander from Sea to Sea, and run to and fro to ſeek it, but ſhould not find it. The other was, that they ſhould go unto Captivity before their Enemies, where God ſhould command the Sword that it ſhould ſlay them, and he would ſet his Eyes on them for Evil and not for Good.* It is worth our time to conſider what we may expect either of theſe ways.

Eccleſ. 1 9.

Amos 8 *c.* 11, 12.

9. *ch* 4.

As

As for a Famine of the Word of the Lord, whether it ſhall come upon us, from that Religion, which openly profeſſes its Deſign to be to take the Scripture out of the hands of the People, or from any other hand; we have reaſon enough to look for it, when we conſider how horridly we have neglected and abuſed it. The greateſt part never trouble themſelves about it, and, perhaps, ſince their firſt Education and Childhood, have never looked on it; others have read it, and fixed it more carefully in their Memories, but rather that by talking in that Stile, they may conceal their Villanies; and by the Miſapplication of it, excuſe their Errors and Faults: but how few read it with a plain Simplicity of mind, to receive Inſtruction and Light from it, and to kindle greater Warmth of Affection in them, from the many excellent Paſſages in it: which what Effect ſoever they may have on vulgar Readers, are, to thoſe that read them, with a well diſpoſed Mind, ſtrong and ſharp as a two edged Sword. It cannot be denyed, but Religion, among us, has loſt much of its Force and Authority; and many, ſeeing thorough the Hypocriſy of one ſort, and the Formality of another, have come to imagine, that there is nothing in it but either Cuſtom or Intereſt. And I wiſh the great Scandals that our Conteſts have given to all men of clear and diſengaged Reaſons, may not have occaſioned or encreaſed this in a great Meaſure. Univerſally the Goſpel is preached and heard without that Senſe, which a thing of ſuch high Conſequence deſerves; for certainly, it muſt be acknowledged, that either Chriſtianity is a Contrivance or Dream, or that it is the moſt important thing in the World. How far other Accidents may deprive us of this, of which the Force and Efficacy is, in a great part, gone, we do not know: whether downright Atheiſm, or the disbelief of all revealed Religion, which has got ſuch footing among us; or other extravagant Conceits of extirpating a Goſpel-Miniſtry, as the decenteſt Introduction to theſe, may not bring us within this Curſe, I ſhall not play the Diviner: but the great rage by which many endeavour to make the Clergy hateful and contemptible, with a Concurrence of ſome other things, ſeems to give juſt Apprehenſions, that we may live yet to ſee ſuch days.

I confeſs, on the other hand, the Appearances ſeem more probable and threatning, that we ſhall be brought under the Tyranny of that Church, that can never hope to advance her Intereſts,

but

but by ſuppreſſing this Light, by prohibiting the Scriptures, and perſwading the World to deliver up their Faith and Conſcience to the keeping and governing of their Prieſts; for who can go over to them, till his Mind is ſo loaded with Prejudices, that he dares not uſe his Underſtanding and Reaſon? Can any man believe that a Biſhop, choſen with all the craft and intrigue that can be uſed among the cunningeſt Stateſmen in the World, ſhould be preſently the Head of the Church, the Univerſal Paſtor, St. *Peter*'s Succeſſor, and the Supream Judge of all Controverſies? who though he underſtand no Divinity, and practiſes as little Morality, yet muſt decide all Controverſies of Religion; and that in his Sentence all muſt acquieſce. He that can believe this, is well enough prepared to go over to them, and to believe the only thing I know, which is more incredible; that a Prieſt by virtue of a Character given him, which is every whit as unintelligible as this great Effect of it, can, by pronouncing of five words, make a piece of Bread and a little Wine, become the whole and entire Subſtance of the Body and Blood of Chriſt; ſo that it is all in every crumb and drop of it. Theſe are things to which men muſt be long and well prepared, before they can think they believe them: for it may be juſtly made a Queſtion, Whether they do, or indeed can believe them? This Religion muſt of neceſſity, for its own ſupport, extinguiſh the Light of the Scriptures: in which, the part that came more immediately, than any other, from God himſelf, has not eſcaped their Expurgation: I mean, the ten Commandments; of which, the Second, one of the fulleſt and moſt copious of them, is left out of their Catechiſms; becauſe it muſt have cleanſed the Churches of Images, and the many Monuments of Idolatry, with which they have defiled it. And in the New Teſtament, that part of it on which they have built moſt, is yet ſo contrary to one of their Devices, that it was fit for them not to let the People underſtand it. I mean the Inſtitution of the Euchariſt, in which Chriſt ſaid, *Drink ye all of this*, when he gave his Diſciples the Cup. They had alſo made their Worſhip ſo ridiculous, by the many ſtrange Legends read on the Saints days, to which both the Collects and Anthems for theſe Offices do relate, that it had been hard to have brought the People to hear theſe things gravely: Therefore it was very fit, for theſe ends, to have their Worſhip in an unknown Tongue: tho' St. *Paul* has written ſo copiouſly on that Subject, that it is not

1 Cor. 14.

eaſie

eaſie to imagine how their minds are compoſed who believe that he was inſpir'd, and yet approve of a Worſhip, in a Language not underſtood by the People.

But after all theſe Corruptions of theirs, why ſhould we not think it reaſonable to believe, that ſince we have given our ſelves up to ſome of the worſt Effects of Popery, God ſhould abandon us ſo far, as to ſuffer us to come again under that yoke from which, by a mighty hand he delivered our Fathers? While we worſhip him meerly out of Form, what difference is there between that and the *telling of Beads*? If we think a looſe Life may, by a few touches of Sorrow, be ſo expiated, that theſe ſhall carry us to Heaven, is not this almoſt as bad as to believe *Attrition is ſufficient to Salvation*? If we think our coming to Church, or Sacrament, will ſave us, is it not as bad as their *Opus operatum*? If we blindly deliver our ſelves up to a Party, and follow all its Intereſts, what better is this than their *Implicit Obedience*? and if we allow our ſelves in that rage and violence, by which many carry on their Opinions, ſeeking the Ruin of all who differ from them, and ſpare no Methods, how falſe or cruel ſoever they be; This is not far from their *Extirpating of Hereticks, and ſaying, there is no Faith to be kept to them.* If by theſe and many more particulars, we examine how much the Spirit of Popery doth ſtill leaven us, many of thoſe who ſeem moſt heartily oppoſite to it, will be found deeply tinctured with it: And if we are ſecretly corrupted with ſome of the worſt Principles of that Religion before we are aware of it, the other parts will more eaſily follow. Our Doctrine and Worſhip are *Reformed:* That we owe to the laſt Age, and to our Educations: But if our Hearts and Lives are vitiated by the ſame ill Principles, under another diſguiſe, it will not be ſo great a Leap as ſome men imagine to get over that Gulf.

Here is one danger before us: it is a great one indeed, and perhaps the very Methods ſome may uſe to ſecure us from it, may precipitate us headlong unto it. *Caiaphas* adviſed the *Jews* to kill our Saviour, fearing that upon his pretending to be a King, the *Romans* might come and take that place; But this did ſo provoke God, that what they feared, came upon them: ſo whether ſome by over bending their Zeal and Fervour, may not overthrow a Church, which has been, ever ſince the Reformation began, the greateſt Bulwark againſt Popery, and drive things much fur-

ther than at preſent they intend or imagine, I leave it to the thoughts of wiſer men.

The other thing threatned by the Prophet, is their being led unto Captivity, and given up to the Sword. Our preſent Wealth and Plenty, the Situation of our Country, the ſtrength of our Fleets, and the Natural Bravery of the Nation, may ſeem perhaps to raiſe us beyond the fear of it: *England* never having been higher in Trade, our Plantations never ſtronger and better Peopled, our Dominions never more extended, and our Shipping going from under one end of Heaven to another. But alas! if God blaſt our publick Councils, and ſtrike us at home with ſuch a Diviſion of Heart, that we cannot agree in things that are neceſſary for common Safety; all our wealth makes us but a more inviting Prey, either for a *Tyre* or *Sidon*, that may be near us, who would gladly carry our Trade from us; or for a great Conqueror that hovers over any of his Neighbours, to ſpy from whence he can receive an Addition to his Empire and *Glory*. And if God intends to give us up to Captivity, he will take away the Heart from our Counſellors, and Spirit and Courage from our Armies and Fleets; as the Prophets threatned the *Iſraelites* often, that thoſe to whom God was to deliver them up, ſhould come upon them with ſo unreſiſtable a Force, and meet with ſo faint an Oppoſition, that they ſhould eaſily fall into their hands.

There is nothing in which the over-ruling Force of divine Providence ſhews it ſelf more than in the riſing and falling of Empires; in which we find often, great Kingdoms ſubdued by a ſmall Force, while the one were elevated with more than ordinary Courage, and the other ſide, by a Series of odd Accidents, as much depreſſed: ſo that vaſt Treaſures and great Armies have melted to nothing; and ſometimes without any viſible Fault in the Conduct; where no rational Account can be given, but that Heaven was on the one ſide. If God is againſt us, he needs no Inſtruments to chaſtiſe us with, he can either by binding or opening the Clouds or Winds of Heaven, blaſt all the Fruits of our Induſtry or Trade: he can bring out of the Duſt of the Earth, Swarms of Vermine to plague us; he can diſcharge his Arrows, and again ſend the Plague or a Fire among us, or ſo give us up to Madneſs and Diſorder, that we ſhall again fall in unnatural Wars at home, and deſtroy one another.

Some of theſe Dangers are not ſo remote, as to be look'd upon

as

as the dark Dreams of melancholly men, or the Speculations of a diſturbed Fancy; what has been may be, and is, perhaps, nearer than we imagine. I ſhall not increaſe your Horror at the Return of ſuch things, by a Pompous and Tragical Deſcription of them; you need but reflect on what you have ſeen and known of many of them: and what if theſe ſhall return upon us again? What if this fruitful and peaceable Land, be again made a Field of Blood, and be watered on both ſides, by the Blood of *Engliſhmen*, Brother fighting againſt Brother, till being thus weakned at home, we become an eaſy Acquiſition, to thoſe who long for ſuch a Breach among our ſelves? And does not the Proſpect of theſe things affect us? What remains then, but that I conclude with the fourth particular, of which I propoſed to ſpeak, that our turning to God, is that which only can prevent thoſe Judgments that we cannot reſiſt. There is no Counſel nor Divination againſt God, he makes the Diviners mad, and brings the Counſels of the Heathen to nothing; he makes the Devices of the people, of none effect: we can neither withſtand his Power, defeat his Wiſdom, nor eſcape his hand; we can only humble our ſelves before him, and turn to him with our whole Hearts; and thereby avert all that ſtorm of heavy Wrath, that is ready to burſt out upon us. If there were a general turning from the evil of our ways, from the Intemperance, Uncleanneſs, Injuſtice, and Impieties, that have ſo long prevailed among us; then how ſoon would all theſe dreadful Symptoms of God's Diſpleaſure fall off? Upon the Repentance of *Nineveh*, thoſe Judgments which were ſo near, that the ſhort period of forty days were prefixed to them, were put off to a longer time: The external, but feigned Humiliation of *Ahab*, procured to him a Reprieve of that Sentence the Prophet had denounced. So if there were but a ceſſation from thoſe horrid Impieties by which God is ſo highly diſhonoured, and of thoſe publick and avowed Vices which no Chriſtian Nation practiſes now more openly than we do; and which have, in a great meaſure, taken our Spirit and Senſe from us; we might hope for a longer continuance of that Tranquility, which we ſtill enjoy. But if no warnings will prevail, if neither paſt Calamities, nor threatned Miſeries, nor the ſenſe which ſome, who have gone in the ſame *exceſs of Riot*, have expreſſed of it when they were near Death, will work on a wicked generation, it ſeems ſuch are already under that Curſe given in Commiſſion

Esa. 6. 10, 11. miſſion to *Eſaias*, *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes; leſt they ſee with their eyes and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their hearts, and convert and be healed:* and that this ſhall laſt till *the Cities be waſted without Inhabitants, the houſes without men, and the Land be utterly deſolate.* Words expreſſing the higheſt Indignation poſſible againſt ſuch Sinners, who had long abuſed the Patience of God, and had mocked him by drawing near to him with their Lips, when their hearts were far from him.

But if the greateſt part will ſtill go on in their Sins, till they periſh by them; yet if there were but a ſmall number that would ſeriouſly ſet themſelves to turn to God, by Prayer, Faſtings, Supplications, and engaging in a courſe of ſtrict and fervent Devotion, and ſo ſtand in that Breach which our ſins and Diviſions have opened; and inſtead of looking after News, or expecting much from Humane Councils, till God's Anger were appeaſed, would cry mightily to him; theſe might be the happy Preſervers and Deliverers of their Country, at leaſt from preſent Danger. Or if the Sins of *England* are ſuch, that God will not be entreated, even of theſe, but will give ſuch evidences of his Diſpleaſure, that all ſhall ſay, *Verily there is a God that judges in the Earth*; yet ſuch mourners ſhall not loſe their labour: their Tears and Prayers ſhall return upon themſelves; they ſhall at the leaſt have their own Souls for a prey, and may be bleſſed Inſtruments of gaining ſome few about them; who, though they may be involved in the common Calamity, yet ſhall find Mercy in the day of the Lord. God grant there may be many ſuch among us and

chap. 9. v. 11. that for their ſakes, *he may raiſe up the Tabernacle of his Anointed and cloſe up the breaches of it, and build it up as in the former times*; and ſo eſtabliſh us in this good Land, which he hath given us, that we may ſtill enjoy the Bleſſings of his pure Religion and holy Word, with the continuance of our Peace and Plenty: and that if Evil be determined to come upon the Land, that we may not ſee it, but may be gathered to our Fathers in Peace. To God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.